

Message Transcript: Why Teach Revelation?

- Lord Jesus, we give You all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for who You are and all that You're doing. And Lord, as we begin this new year would You be high and lifted up. Would You be honored and praised in who we are. Lord, we gather as Your servants to serve You, to honor You and to experience You. So today, as Your word is preached will You have Your way with us in such a way that we know we've been transformed more into the image of our glorious God. And for all who are ready to receive what God has to say, believe what He says and put into practice by faith what He shows you, would you agree with me this morning by very loudly saying the word amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Amen, well, this morning I wanna talk to you about how to take a step of faith. I believe every time it comes to the new year there are certain ones of you that have set New Year's resolutions. Some of you will keep them until at least January 8th. Some a little longer. Some a couple months. Some have gotten to the place where you said, I don't keep New Year's resolutions. That's just not for me. I am who I am and I'm comfortable with that. Different people as they come to church in the new year, it's usually a time where people are looking to reset something. There could be an area in your life. It could be a relationship. It could be your health. It could be finances where you start to think, well, this is kind of a reset season. Maybe I need to consider that. And oftentimes, even when you go to church the first Sunday of the year, somebody will preach to you or promise you that God has all these things for you in this calendar year. This happens to be 2021 and here's how you get in on it. And God just wants to lavish you with massive blessing. And while I believe that God is a God who blesses us, that's not what I wanna talk about today, 'cause what I wanna talk about today is not something just for the year of 2020. I want to talk about something that you can put into practice right now. That you can put into practice a year from now, five years from now, that will be true every time. And it really boils down to trusting God's direction in your life. Now when I say that, here's what I'm talking about. When you're asking questions like this, what way does God want me to go? Should I get married or should I break this relationship off? Should I take this job or should I take that job? What type of income should I use? Hey, how should I be using my resources? What kind of relationships do I need to have? Anytime that you have a question that you need God to speak into, this is going to answer what you should be doing. Because for many of us, while we believe in God, while we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, many of us when we have questions, don't know how to process the questions with God to see what is God saying and how do I go His way? Others of you have heard people like pastors talk about this before. But at the end of the day what you would say is I hear people talk about how God leads you and God directs you, but I really know nothing about that. And I'd really like to learn if God wants to help me with direction in my life. I'd really like to know how to do that. And so what I wanted to start this year off with is trusting God's direction. How can you trust his direction? What does it look like to trust His direction and what decisions do you need to make as you seek the Lord for His direction in your life so that where you step you know that that's the Lord that's leading you there. And to do that this morning, we're gonna take a look at two verses in the book of Proverbs. If you'd open up to Proverbs, chapter three. Proverbs chapter three, we're gonna read verses five and six today. Proverbs 3:5-6. I'll read these aloud a couple of times, 'cause it's very short. It says this, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and he will make your paths straight. I'm gonna read it one more time. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. Now by show of hands, how many have heard this before? All right, now in this verse, you have answers to how you can trust God's direction for any question that you would have in your life. I've made this outline super simple so that you can remember it. We're gonna talk about four ways that you can trust God's direction in your life today. All of them start with the letter C. That's just how they turned out. But the first is this, when it comes to trusting God's direction you must trust God's direction completely. You must trust His direction completely. That means entirely. Notice what He says. Trust in the Lord. How? With all your heart. With all your heart, not part of your heart, but trust Him completely. Now when it comes to faith, one thing I wanna say about faith, faith is important for us in every spiritual aspect. The way we come to Christ, we come to Christ by faith. The Bible says in Acts 16:31, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. So belief, trust, faith is essential for our salvation. But when we think about this faith, it's not just this idea that's out there. Well, I guess there was a Jesus that lived. And I guess, if He died on the cross, I don't have any reason to

believe He didn't, so I'll just believe in that. No, belief is this centered, personal response where you're giving all of your heart to what you say you believe. You're believing on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man who died in your place for all your sins and rose from the dead. And I'm believing, I'm trusting. I'm putting my faith in Him who died and rose for me. That's belief. And faith is not only essential to entry into the faith, it's essential as we continue. In Hebrews 11:6, it says without faith it is impossible to please God. It's impossible. You cannot please God without faith, without trusting, without believing. So when it comes to God's direction in your life, for many of us we don't experience His direction 'cause we're not trusting Him completely. We sometimes hear what God says, but we don't often act on what He says. Perhaps you've had this experience before where you've been in a church service like this and God speaks deeply to your heart through His word and you hear His voice like, yeah, that's God's speaking. I know what I need to do. Or you've been in a community group and through that group, somebody says something or you hear something through the Word where you say that was for me. I needed to hear that. Or maybe you've been doing personal Bible study where God shows up and says something to your heart. But isn't it interesting how quickly we can take what God says to us and shelf it and say, yeah, I probably should, but there's probably some other resources out there I need to study as well. God sometimes speaks to us and tells us to take a step of faith and what we'd rather do is go to our bookstore or get on Amazon and buy a book on prayer. Instead of listening to the voice of God, we say, well I'll just get a book on prayer. I'll pray about that. Or God speaks to us and says here's what I want you to trust me with. And that sounds pretty good, God, but I need to talk to all the rest of my friends to see what they say first. Trusting God completely means when you hear God speak through His word and you know it's Him, that you place the entirety of your faith in Him. And that's why Jesus throughout His ministry, even for those that would say that He was the Lord of their life, He would say questions like this. "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?" What you believe is evidenced by how you live. Did you know that? You don't need to tell me what you believe? I don't need to tell you what I believe it will be evidenced by how I live. There's a lot of people that say they believe this, but they act entirely different than what they say they believe. What they actually believe is how they live, right? If you say you believe in fidelity in your marriage, then you live with fidelity in your marriage. You don't need to talk about it. You just live it. If you believe that you should tithe your money, you don't have to believe it, you evidence it by showing that you tithe your money. And for many of us, there's things we say we believe but we don't actually do them. So we say things like this, I know I should. I know I should this. I know I should that. But I don't because I really don't believe it. If you're gonna experience God's direction in your life, if you want God to lead your path it's trusting Him completely with what He reveals to you. Whether you're brand new to the faith or you're a seasoned veteran for a long time, God wants you to take what He's showing you in that moment and trust Him then, completely. A couple of things about faith. First of all, because it's your whole heart, when you read a heart in the Old Testament, it's talking about your mind, emotions and will. It means I'm all in on this thing. Faith is not just this passive, yeah, I should go to church. Yeah, I'll try that. It's everything. I mean, picture Olympic athletes. Picture professional athletes. When they give their whole heart to something it's not piecemeal, it's everything. If you're gonna experience God's direction, He's saying trust me with everything. Trust me completely. Pour your heart into it. It's also present. Faith is not something in the future. We're believing now for what's going to happen in the future, but my faith begins today. We walk by faith and not by sight. And so what God calls us to do is to trust Him completely. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. So it begs this question. What area in your life are you not trusting the Lord with? To trust the Lord completely means I'm leaning entirely on Him. It means He has me and that's the kind of faith that God wants. For many of us, we don't relish faith because we're afraid. We're afraid that if we step out in faith that we're gonna experience failure or rejection. So oftentimes, we spiritualize our lack of faith because we're afraid to actually step where God wants us to step. Because the reality is until we step, we can't experience faith. It's a lot like riding a bike. You can't learn how to ride a bike from a PowerPoint presentation or a lecture. You can't learn about balance any other way than getting on a bike and learning what it's like to wobble or have somebody help you from behind. But it's usually that teetering and tottering or falling and the pain where you say don't wanna do it that way again. Now, I know how to do this. In the Christian life, faith doesn't mean that when you choose to act the way you believe God's leading you, that you're going to get it right every single time. It means I'm taking steps and I'm being intense with my whole heart. I'm going after God. If I get it wrong, it's gonna be a gigantic mistake but I'm trusting the Lord. I mean just think about some of the stories. Some of them we've read before. Some of them we've done recently and I have a whole list here. I won't read them all. But think about the faith stories we read about in the Bible. I mean, we read about Noah recently building the ark and preaching faithfully for 120 years, even though nobody ever followed him. We began to talk about Abraham who believed God to go and build a nation where there had been no nation and he went not knowing where he was going. Or Moses who went to Egypt to free God's people, even though he didn't know what that was gonna look like and he felt ill-equipped. Or David who stood up to God's enemies and led an entire nation. Or Peter who walked on water and preached the first sermon. And we hear all these stories like, yeah, I wanna do that. But we think, falsely, that the people that I just read about are gods or little G gods. No, they're sinful human beings in need of the grace of God. Because as I tell you about all these characters, I can tell you also about these people. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, but we also read that Noah got drunk and laid naked in his tent. We also read that Abraham was called of God and that He gave a promised child through Sarah but it wasn't working out

on the timeframe that Abraham had. So he decided he would take another wife to have the child. Slept with another woman other than his wife. Or we read about how Moses in the heart of being a deliverer, actually, murdered an Egyptian and then to cover it up, actually, buried him so nobody would ever find him. We read about David. We know his frailties. And although he was a man after God's own heart, what did he do? He sinned against God with Bathsheba and then had her husband, Uriah, killed. And then Peter who walked on water and preached the first sermon. I mean who was he? He was the one that the very night that Jesus Christ was betrayed and standing right in front of Him in the courtyard betrayed Jesus Christ and denied Him to His face. Everybody in the Bible, other than Jesus Christ, is a failure. Everybody in the Bible, other than Jesus Christ, is a sinner. And yet for many of us we get analysis paralysis where we're like I don't know if I'm gonna get this one right. If I take this job and this, what's God want? I don't know. You have to be moving to experience God. If you've become a believer by faith in Christ and you just sit around and you don't take the steps that God prompts you to, your faith begins to stagnate and atrophy and God wants you to begin to take steps of faith. Where's He been prompting you to take a step of faith? Sometimes we stop hearing the voice of God, because He prompts us in a certain area that we don't wanna hear about and we're like, nah, I don't wanna hear that. When you tell me about what I'm really praying about, then I'll listen to You. It's those little promptings that God is giving us to know that we're actively being obedient to Him. Trust Him completely. Trust Him completely. That's what God would have for you. So the question is where are you not trusting God completely? If there's areas in your life where you're not trusting Him completely, it's difficult to experience God's direction in your life. Secondly is this, not only are we called to trust God completely, we're called to trust God courageously. It says trust in the Lord with all your heart. So place your faith in the Lord with all your heart and what? Do not lean on your own understanding. It's the same way of saying what He originally said. Have you ever had the experience where you've heard the Lord speak to you, but then you begin to think that doesn't make a lot of sense? I don't know that that's gonna work out. If I go that way, if I give this generously, if I meet that person that doesn't, ah, I don't know that the outcome of that is gonna be what I want. That's when we begin to start trusting ourselves, rather than trusting the Lord. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Trust Him completely and lean not on your own understanding. You know what that takes courage? Courage. It takes courage. A lot of people say if you have faith, you won't have fear. Every story I read in the Bible and every personal story where I've taken faith is always accompanied by fear. Faith is just a way of stepping through the fear and trusting God in the fear. I mean, think about this. If you were one of the 12 disciples on the boat and you called out to Jesus said, if it's you, tell me to walk on the water and Jesus said, come, now you've heard the voice of God. Come, do not rely on your own understanding, because if you begin to think about that, what are you gonna say? I can't walk on water. What did I do? I can't get out of this boat. I can't do this. There's no way I can. If Peter would've taken counsel of his own fears he would've stayed in the boat. But in that moment, for a period of time, Peter says, well, He said come. I'm gonna come even though it doesn't sense and now you have two men walking on the water, right? When God peaks to you about something, don't take counsel of your own fears. Don't think well I can't do this because or that won't work because or we don't have the resources for that or I don't have the education for that or I don't have the relationships for that. There's no way this would work out if. Every great story that you love reading in the Bible of faith had no chance of ever happening if God doesn't show up. No chance. It's only by God and His grace that He works through faith and does supernatural things with ordinary people. And God's willing to lead your life in a direction to do supernatural things through your life. Even though you and I are both ordinary people. Now, how important is faith? Faith seems to be very important to me. And when I read through the New Testament, I see Jesus say these words several times. "Your faith has made you well." You ever read those before? With the woman who was in a bleeding condition that had been in it for 12 years. And Jesus healed her and said, "Your faith has made you well." With the 10 lepers that he healed, He told the one, "Your faith has made you well." With the blind beggar, He told him, "Your faith has made you well." Even the prostitute that's washing Jesus' feet at the table, He says, "Your faith has saved you." We get this idea that faith is super important to how God's going to respond. But let's describe what faith is. Faith is not how fervent I am. Faith is not what I do for God. Faith is how much trust I have in how vast God is and how big He is and what God can do. Let me give you an example. Some of you remember when we could go to the swimming pool in the summer. Remember what that was like? And parents would stand on the side of the pool with their little kids. You see it every now and again. Maybe you've done it and parents coaxing their kids to jump. It's gonna be okay. And it's gonna be okay because when you jump, I'm gonna catch you. And the kid sometimes is mustering up, I mean, other kids are diving in before the parents get their personality changed, but some kids need to be coaxed. And as they're being coaxed, come on jump, you got this, you got this. Now what's the kid trying to place their faith in? They're trying to muster up enough faith to believe that when they jump, they're actually going to be caught. So who is their faith actually in? It's the one who's catching them. I used to play that game with my kids. Hey, jump, Daddy's got you. I always caught them. I have a perfect track record of catching my kids in a five foot pool. I was awesome. But if I was down at the bottom of Niagara Falls looking up at my kids and say jump, Daddy's got you. Even if my kids, quote, mustered up enough faith and leaped they would be very disappointed, because I would not've had the wherewithal to perform what I told them I was going to do. Their faith is not in what they can do, their faith needs to be in who can perform what they're trusting. Does that make sense? We falsely believe sometimes that faith means if I just believe I'm gonna get healed, I'll get healed. If I just believe I'm

gonna get more money, I'll get my money. If I just believe, I just believe. I gotta believe more. I, I, I, I, I, it's not about you. It's about believing the one who is in you. Now here's a truth I've been thinking about a lot that's been refreshing to me lately. It's not a new truth, but I believe it needs to be reminded to us. When you were converted by the Holy Spirit and He regenerated your heart, He did not leave you alone and tell you now work really hard so that God will be pleased with you. Do you know what happened? At the moment you were converted, the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. He indwells you. Ephesians 1:13-14 talks a little bit about this. In Ephesians 1:13-14 it says, having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. At the moment that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit, a down payment guaranteeing you all the future promises that God has for you. And more so, we read about the glory of the gospel as Paul writes to the Colossian church in Colossians 1:27, when he talks about the riches of glory of this mystery that which was unknown before among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. That's why John says in I John 4:4, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Listen to me, this is not a new truth. It's just an often forgotten one. When you became a Christian, Jesus Christ came to dwell in your life through the Holy Spirit. Meaning this, you are never alone. You're never alone. The Christian faith is not about you coming to Christ and then performing all sorts of things to get closer to God. The truth of it is, you can't get any closer than Christ in you. He's already close. What's the purpose of all the spiritual disciplines? It's to allow the Spirit of God who already indwells you to do greater work in and through you than He ever could before. For you to experience more of Him than you ever could before. I was looking at some new believer books just this week to see how they orchestrated the different chapters. And most of them start with something like this, the importance of assurance and understanding your salvation or the importance of God's word or the importance of prayer. The importance of community. The importance of a church. The importance of evangelism. I agree with all of it, but not one started with, hey, you just became a believer, you're not alone. Christ dwells inside of you. So every single one of these disciplines is God working out something through you. You're not reading the Bible so you get closer to God. You're reading the Bible because the God of the Universe already lives inside of you and is growing you and stimulating you and helping you to reveal all that God wants you to be. You don't pray just so you get closer to God. You pray, because as you pray, the Holy Spirit who is inside of you reveals from the Father through the Son to you what God is speaking about in His throne room and you can grow closer to God. Why is this so important? Because I think many Christians always tend to feel like they're alone. Some of you feel like you're alone right now. Some of you are going through relationship challenges where you've been through a divorce and you feel like you're alone. Some of you have lost a spouse this year. You feel like you're alone. Some of you have lost jobs. You feel like you're alone. Some of you can't seem to get connected to community. You feel like you're alone. There's always times where the enemy wants to isolate you and pick you off. 'Cause he knows if he can get you to believe that you're alone, he can do his work in your life. But here's the truth for every single believer. Know this, no matter where you go, no matter who you are and no matter what you do, you are never alone. God is always with you. Isn't that great news?

- [Congregation Member] Yes.

- So when we talk about trusting God courageously it means I believe that the Spirit of God is inside of me. I'm not the courageous one. The Spirit of God inside of me is the courageous one. And if I'll allow Him to take over, if I'm not gonna lean on my own understanding but I'm gonna trust Him alone, He can do things in and through me or encourage me to do things that I wouldn't otherwise choose to do myself and so I'm listening to Him. It's God directing through His Holy Spirit in and through you. And there's so many passages on the Holy Spirit. We don't have time to go through all of them today. But I just wanted to point out one to you in John 16:13, it says, but when He, the Spirit of truth comes and this was prior to Jesus's death, this was the night He was betrayed. The Holy Spirit hadn't been dispensed like it was in Acts two. Now we know that every single believer who trusts in Christ has the Holy Spirit in him or her and you don't have to wait for Him to come. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears He will speak and He will disclose to you what is to come. See this is the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is not you were a bad person. So believe historically, that Jesus did some stuff and then really work hard to get close to Jesus. The gospel news is this, your dead because of sin, but through Christ's death, burial and resurrection you've been made alive. And by believing and trusting Him, He's gonna deposit His spirit in you. Here's how you know you're alive because the Spirit bears witness in you that you're completely different. And when you're with other people there's a connection with other Christians. That's completely different, 'cause you were dead and now you're alive. You were an enemy and now you're a friend. You were lost and now you're found. And here's how you know, 'cause God lives in you. And so everything that you're about now is allowing that God, the Trinity God that is in you, to be expressed fully through your life in such a way that He manifests Himself in and through you. So when people see your life, they say that's what a woman looks like that's filled with the Spirit. That's what a man looks like that's filled with the Spirit. That's what a teacher looks like that's filled with the Spirit. That's what a coach looks like that's filled with the Spirit. That's what a politician looks like that's filled with the Spirit. I mean, that's the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is not behavioral modification so you can get better for God and hide

all your bad stuff. The message of the gospel is you are bad stuff. You're dead. God wants to make you alive. He sent Jesus to make you alive, so you can experience a resurrected, present life in your life now and, ultimately, live forever with Him. And the good news of the gospel is that resurrected God, the life giving Christ, will direct your life if you completely trust Him and you courageously trust Him by not leaning on your own understanding. I mean, the message of the gospel is that God wants to presently visit you here as you give him your entirety of your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength. And that's why we keep learning. I mean, there's different ways that we can do it. I mean, I encourage you to spend time in God's word. The more time you spend in God's word, the more you will see that He has something to say about every area of your life. There's nowhere you can go and there's nothing you're gonna get involved in where God would look at you and say, yeah, I don't care about that. You just to live that way yourself over there. I care about these things over here. God cares comprehensively about all areas and His word talks about that. So spend time in His word. Number two, spend time in prayer. Grow in prayer. The more you grow in God's word and the more you grow in prayer, the more that you will realize you don't know about God's word and the more you'll realize you don't know about prayer. I mean, the more you grow in that discipline the more you realize that an infinite, Holy, eternal God speaks through His living and active word, talks to you through prayer and that you can't get enough of it. It's not just a routine like, yeah, I gotta go pray. It's probably what I need. I have to go. I can't be who God wants me to be, if I don't spend time connecting with Him and listening to Him. Third is this, community. Do you have other people in your life that love the Lord and love you enough to speak into your life to encourage you, to build you, but also to admonish you or say, hey, you know when you said that or when you acted that way, this just didn't feel right to me? Do you have people like that? See, you cannot be the fullness of who God wants you to be alone. The reason He established the church is for us to have relationships with other people that we can be completely transparent with. The A in BRAVE stands for authenticity. Authenticity means that you can see my good, my bad, my ugly. It's cool because I'm not all that great, but the who saved me is and He's still growing me. We need community. Not because it's the right thing to do, but because when I'm in community that's when I'm growing the most in my relationship with Christ and I get to experience God's direction. And then fourth, I would say this, it's your experience. Understand the experiences that you've been through are all part of God's curriculum for your life. When I was younger, I remember asking one of my professors how do I get to where you are? Like, how do I live your life? As if there was this roadmap that if I just followed and went to the schools that he went to and did what he did, I'd be at the exact place. And when you're young, there's this naivety that you can just follow somebody else's roadmap. As you mature, you realize God has His own curriculum and road for you. And He's gonna take you down different paths with different challenges and different things than anybody else who has ever lived or will ever live again. So the question is, why did God take me down this road? 'Cause some of the times we begrudgingly talk about our past experiences. There's times Kim and I have talked about our past experiences. If I would've known you like 30 years ago, I woulda lived differently. I woulda done things different. Why did I go through that? Why did I do that? Or these four years of my life, I would never live those four years again. I couldn't stand them when I was in them. I don't ever wanna do those again. But do you know what I've found? In every area that I look back on my life and say that's not what I would wanna do. I'd never go through that again. Why did I have to go through that? Those are some of the most growing times spiritually for me and have made me who I am. So then I began to think with a fresh lens and say, God, thank you for taking me through that. That was great pain. That was great enjoyment. Because of that, I now know and can experience things that I wouldn't have otherwise experienced 'cause that wouldn't have been the road I woulda traveled. Study your experience and thank God for why He's given you the things that He's given you. Thank God for why He hasn't given you the things He hasn't given you. There are some things in here that you excel at. You're just a natural. Nobody even has to help you with it. It just comes so easy to you. Why is that for you? 'Cause God gave you a gift. There are some of you, you could try certain disciplines or skills for the rest of your life, you still wouldn't be that good at it. Why didn't God give that to you? Because in that area, He's helping you to lean into others. Trust your experience, God's word, prayer, community and experience. As you grow in those, God will help you grow. So trust God's direction completely. Trust His direction courageously. Third is this, trust God's direction comprehensively. Trust His direction comprehensively. That's every area of your life. It says this, in all your ways acknowledge Him. That means in all your ways, know him. That means in all your ways know how God would want you to act, behave, think and respond in every single situation that you're in. Now, when you think about comprehensive think about all the areas of life that God wants you to be obedient in. I mean if you're single, God has a way that He wants you to live single. If you're married, God has a way that He wants you to live married. When it comes to your money God speaks how you should steward your money and what that looks like. When it comes to your vocation or your calling, God has a lot to say about that. When it comes to how your avocations and your hobbies and how you should spend time and do that, God has a lot to say on that. Mission, God has a lot to say on that. Why you're here on this earth, God has a lot to say on that. Everywhere you go God's word has something to say to you and God wants you to be so acquainted with His ways that you would know what God would want you to do in each and every situation and continue to learn that. Now we don't have time to go through this whole text in Proverbs chapter three but let me highlight the next few verses for you, which will help us understand three ways that you can grow comprehensively. Three ways that you can grow comprehensively. You can write these down. The first is becoming a lifelong learner. Be a lifelong learner. Notice what He says in

verses seven and eight, do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Fear the Lord, turn away from evil, it'll be healing. What does it mean to fear the Lord? It means to awe the Lord. It means to worship the Lord. You say where do you get lifelong learner from that? Because when you spend time in the presence of the Lord, spending time in the presence of the Lord causes you to be humble. Spending time in the presence of the Lord causes you to realize you don't know everything. Spending time in the presence of the Lord, makes you realize you have a lot more to know than what you actually know and you have a lot more growing to do than you actually realize. Spending time in the presence of the Lord humbles you and when you're humble, guess what you are? You're teachable. You're teachable. When you meet somebody who's not teachable in the things of the Lord, it just is showing they're not a worshiper of God. They're not spending time in the presence of the Lord. I remember when I went to seminary meeting some of the professors that were there at the time they were in their 80s and their 90s, who when they talked about the word of God would have tears in their eyes, because they were learning new, fresh revelation from the word of God that the Lord was revealing to them. And I remember thinking as a young student, wow, that's amazing. I kind of thought as a young kid like by the time you're 90, you probably know it all. And here's these lifelong learners. God wants us to be a lifelong learner. In other words, none of us have cornered the market on any topic. God's an expert on marriage. I'm not. Right, baby? God's an expert on singleness. God's an expert on money. God's an expert on how to spend your time. God's an expert on His church. God's an expert on worship. So for me to get to a place where I say I know it all, there's nothing more to learn, it's to say I don't know the infinite God that I'm trying to proclaim. God's always teaching me new things. Next week, I start the book of Revelation. We'll be teaching through verse by verse, word by word through the book of Revelation. For me to stand up and tell you, I know everything there is to know about the book of Revelation and there's nothing else for me to learn is laughable. I'm still learning while I study. I will learn 20, 30 years from now if God still gives me breath. There's things I'm still learning. The things that are clear, I'll make clear. The things that I tell you I'm still learning, I'm still learning. We're gonna learn together, right? That's what it means to be a lifelong learner. It's being humble and it's being teachable and it's not being prideful. You've been around people in Christian community when you have a marriage problem and you go talk to them like, yeah, we used to struggle with that when we were like you. Or you're struggling with your finances and say, yeah, we used to struggle with that. We didn't know how to do it either. Here's a book. Versus people that can look you in the eye and say, you know what? We're still growing in our marriage. You know what? We're still learning how to steward our resources. You know what? We're still growing in Christ and we'll probably learn a lot from you, too. And when I've met men and women in the body of Christ that have that sense of humility, there's this drawing power. Be a lifelong learner. Don't ever get to a point where you think you know everything. And I'll just say this 'cause I hear it a lot as a pastor, you know, sometimes at parties, sometimes at gatherings, somebody'll say something like this. Yeah, I've already read the Bible and I've been to church, so I really don't need to go. Listen, I've read the Bible, too. I don't know how many times I've read the Bible. Lots of times. I've been to church, lots of times. I come because I wanna experience Christ even more and I haven't arrived at the taste of experiencing all of Christ that I wanna taste. I can't get enough of Him, right? Like that should be our attitude. Be a lifelong learner. Second is this, be a generous giver. Notice verses nine and 10, be a generous giver. Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce, so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with wine. Honor the Lord. Jesus said in the New Testament, "Honor your father and mother." That wasn't just talking about respect, that was talking about as they age, monetarily take care of them. They took care of you. You take care of them. Honor means to give financial resources to, honor the Lord with the first fruits of your wealth. You say, I'm just talking about God's direction. Listen, I'm telling you about God's direction. You wanna experience God's direction in your life? You're gonna be a lifelong learner. You're gonna be humble. Why? Because God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. You wanna experience God's direction, be humble. You wanna experience God's direction? Be generous. Be a generous giver. When you hoard your resources thinking that they belong to you, you can't experience God's direction. Because what you're saying by your actions is I can't trust God with what seems to be most important to me, which is my money. Just give. If you're generous with God, here's the truth. You can never out-give Him. It's impossible. God tells us in Malachi three, this is my paraphrase, I triple-dog dare you to try to out-give me. You can't. You can't. Put me to the test. See me in this. I've told you this story many times before when I was 24 years old and I went into the ministry, I went from making a lot of money to making \$1,000 a month before taxes. I was given a creaky little parsonage and my dad had given me a used car that I didn't have to make payments on. So I took that \$1,000, I gave 200 to taxes. I took the first \$100 and I gave it to the church. I lived off 700 bucks a month. And I remember now, Lord, there's no way this is ever gonna work, but I'm gonna be generous. And I wasn't doing it to get something back. I was really doing it just to test God 'cause I told the Lord, if I run out of money I'm done with the ministry and then I'll go back and coach football or do something significant with my life. I never ran out of money. As a matter of fact, God lavished more back. And so I become more generous and then when it came time to go to seminary, I knew God was calling me there, but I said, "Lord, I'm not going into debt to go to seminary. So if you're calling me to seminary, I'm not paying for it." And God provided resources that I graduated seminary debt free. I've learned to trust Him with resources so much that when it came time to have a ministry that we started or came time to call our church into a building campaign or whatever, I feel so great to tell you, you can't out-give God. Now, let me tell you

what I'm not saying. Just so you don't run away. I'm not saying give God \$100 and he'll give you 1,000. I'm not saying give God \$10,000, He'll give you 100,000. I'm not saying that. I'm saying be generous to the things of God, because it's in your heart and I promise you he'll take care of everything you need and you'll always have an abundance and you'll always have enough. That's a fact. And many of us don't experience the fullness of God in our life, 'cause we're praying about direction. Should I get married? Should I not get married? And God's said, yeah, but let's talk about the fact that you hoard all your resources. And we begin to think, yeah, but I'm not talking about resources. I'm talking about this dude. He's like really good-looking and I wanna, right? Some of the reasons we don't experience God's direction in our life is because we're not willing to do the basic things He wants us to do. And some of you can even hear this message and say, well, I'm 10. I don't have any money. You have more net disposable income than anybody, 'cause you don't pay for anything. That was for my son, who's not here. So the point is wherever you are, you can begin to put things into practice. And God knows whether you're seven or 77 he wants to provide direction for your life if you'll do these things. If you're a humble, lifelong learner and you're a generous giver, it opens up God's heart to you. And then the third one is this, be a disciplined disciple. Look at verses 11 and 12. My son do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe his reproof for whom the Lord loves He reproves even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. You can see that repeated in Hebrews 12:5. I mean, here's the deal. God wants you to know that while you're going His way doesn't mean you're always gonna get it right. And God loves you enough to discipline you. God loves you enough to correct you. Don't spurn that. Don't shun that. Allow the Lord's discipline to come into your life. Be willing to let the Lord tell you, you need to go tell that person you were wrong. Be willing to let the Lord tell you, you need to tell the whole church you were wrong. Be willing to let the Lord tell you, no we're going a different direction than that. And if you're humble and you're generous and you're giving, it's not gonna be a big deal to be disciplined by the Lord. I mean disciple, I mean comes from the word discipline. I mean discipline comes from the word disciple. I mean part of our life is to be disciplined about the things that God wants us to have. And some of us, while we're asking for God to do great and mad, majestic things in our life, we have this deal over here that we're not dealing with. And we say, oh, that's not that big of a deal. And God says, no, I want you to deal with that. I want you to work on that. I want you to let me show you why the way you're dealing with that is so wrong and I'll bring you through that. I'll bring you out of that. But you've got to let Me have control. God wants to have control completely. He wants you to trust courageously and He wants you to trust him comprehensively. That's every area of your life. As a humble lifelong learner, as a generous giver, you'll read scriptures. There's hundreds of them throughout the Bible. The more generous you are, the more you get back in return, because God knows He can trust you. Now, you say if this is so simple or so clear, shall we say, that if I trust God completely and I trust Him courageously and I trust him comprehensively, I mean that's it? How come I'm not experiencing it? Here would be my answer to you, because you don't want to. You just don't want to. Within this last year I began, actually a few years ago I guess, I began taking skiing lessons. I began taking some golfing lessons. Prior to a couple of years ago, I didn't care. I played golf a few times a year. I skied more than that each year, usually. But I hated going skiing with people that tried to coach me all the time. You ever had that experience? Where you're hitting a ball, you're playing golf and then, "Oh man, your arm's not straight. Yeah, you need to pull this back." I'm like, shut up. I don't care. I'm just having fun out here. I mean I came just to have fun with you. You know I didn't come out here so you could coach me the whole time. Or you know your skiing and they're like, "Hey, you're from the Midwest. You know, you gotta lean down the hill, keep your shoulders square." I'm like, I don't care. Just let me have some fun, right? When I got to a place where I cared, then I got better at both. Because now I pay for ski lessons for somebody to tell me everything I do wrong. So now they better deliver the goods, right? Now, I pay for somebody to help me with my golf, so they owe me that. But for many of us, when it comes to the Christian faith we hear all these truths about God, but deep down in our heart we're like, yeah, I don't really care. I'm not really willing to completely trust you. I don't wanna step out courageously, comprehensively. No thanks. You can have about 80% of my life, but not that. And then we wonder why, how come it is that other people talk about God's doing different things in their life and moving, but I never see it? That's why it's that clear in the word, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. Then he gives us the fourth way to trust him. This is the result. Trust the Lord God's direction confidently. It says at the end of verse six and he will make your paths straight. He'll make your paths straight. What that really means is He'll remove all obstacles for you to walk. Then if you're walking His way and because we walk by faith and not by sight we don't know what the next step's gonna be, but God will move that out. It doesn't mean that if you're a Christian and you trust the Lord that you're gonna have this really smooth stairway all the way to heaven. It's just gonna be easy street. It means as you're trusting the Lord to take steps where you're taking them even if there's obstacles in the way, even if it seems impossible. How am I gonna get around that through that, over that? God says if you just trust Me completely, if you'll courageously step out and do that, if comprehensively in every area of your life you do, I'll remove every obstacle to make sure you get to walk right where I wanted you to walk. I'll accomplish everything in your life. I mean, that's God's promise. And who's the one that makes the path straight? Is it me or is it God? It's God. And yet, for many of us, even as Christians we spend our whole life trying to make our paths straight. We try to control our marriage. We try to control our kids. We try to control our finances. We can try to control our geography. We try to control our vocation. It doesn't work. We can't keep the paths straight. God says, "If you trust me, I'll keep your paths straight." Proverbs 16:9 says, in his heart a

man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps. God wants us to have vision. God wants us to see Him. God wants us to walk in ways. He just wants us to do it in an openhanded way where we're taking one step at a time where He can tell us which way to go. And it's really interesting because the scripture in Isaiah 30:21 it's a place that I turn off and you wanna write this verse down. Isaiah 30:21 tells us how God works. He says, your ears will hear a word behind you. This is the way, walk in it. Whenever you turn to the right or to the left. Your ears will hear that voice. If you're comprehensively and courageously and completely trusting God, you'll hear that voice from behind when you're ready to turn right or left, here's the way, walk in it. God, should I get married or break up? Walk in this. Go this way. Should I take that job or this job? Walk in this. You'll hear His voice. You won't need to hear anybody else. You can hear God. And for all of us, we would say, I'd love to hear God. And we love hearing Him when it goes our way. We don't love hearing Him when He says, no, go this way. But if you go His way, you can hear His voice through His word, sometimes through other people, sometimes subjectively, where He says that this is the way, walk in it. And when we trust God's direction, finally, we trust Him confidently. We trust Him confidently. The reason we're trusting him confidently is we're totally expecting that if I'm doing the things that God requires that I can expect confidently, that God's gonna come through for me. I don't need to worry about that. It's interesting, when we let God direct the outcomes. I mean if 2020 taught you anything, you should be completely certain at all times that you're uncertain about outcomes, right? I mean that's, we tend to hang on and go the way, this is gonna be the outcome. I know it's gonna be like this. But here's what we're totally certain about, you don't know. You don't know. What you're certain of is in the moment how God is leading you. That's all you can be certain of, right? You can't be certain about a year from now, five years from now, 10 years from now. You can be certain that Jesus Christ is still Lord, but you can't be certain about how He's gonna lead you or what circumstances He's gonna use to grow. You can't be certain. You can be certain about your uncertainty of what's coming. And the glory of that is if you're going God's way, no matter what circumstances He brings you can experience His peace in His presence in your life. All of us would say, I have questions for God. If God were here, I would ask Him this. I wish He would give me that answer. And here's God's response, I would right now if you trusted Me completely and courageously and comprehensively. I'll give it to you. Here's the problem. The problem God would say is not with Him, the problem's with us because we're unwilling to lean on Him. We're unwilling to trust Him. We have too much knowledge ourselves and we're telling God why this isn't gonna work. And then we wonder, well, I guess God doesn't care. Oh, He cares. He loves you a ton. I mean the gospel of Jesus Christ demonstrates that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that you could be saved. He fulfilled the law and did what you could never do. He died on the cross for all your sins. He shed his blood because you were dead and not alive. He went to the grave for you and came out of the grave as the resurrected Christ and offers life to any dead soul that would want Him as their God. And if you repent of your sin and trust Jesus Christ, you turn from your sin and trust God, He will give you life and give you life in His name. He will make you alive and if you're alive, you're never alone. And if you're never alone, He promises to be with you and never leave you or forsake you. And He'll be with you till the end of the age. And then His encouragement is I have so much for you. I have the best plan. Well, what is it, God? Every single moment by moment, day by day just trust me for the direction I wanna lead your life and I'll take you that way. And if you go God's way, you'll look back over your shoulder and say, wow, that's not what I would've planned. That's not how I woulda done it and all glory to God for all He's done in my life. See here's the beauty of this, God loves each and every one of you with an unconditional love. And if you don't have a relationship with Him it's as simple as believing in His name, believing that Jesus Christ died and rose from the grave for you. And if you have a relationship with Him, I'm telling you no matter where you are in your walk with Jesus Christ, there is way, way, way more. And God wants to do through you what he has never done through anybody else. He doesn't need you to be the best somebody else. He needs you to be the best of allowing His Spirit to work in and through your individual life for His glory. And the beauty of that is it's not you doing the work. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory, doing the work, amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- So as we start this year, we're not just talking about today. We're not just talking about tomorrow or next month. We're talking about a lifetime of trusting God completely, courageously and comprehensively, so that we can trust him confidently that He has our future in store. Amen. Amen. Would you pray with me? Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who You are. And, Lord, we ask that You would use Your word in our life to stimulate us towards love and good deeds that You would accomplish Your purpose in and through us. If you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and you know you're separated from God, then you can pray like this. Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm dead and separated from You, but I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead and that You're the Lord of all. And right now, I believe in You. I turn my life over to You and I give You all the praise. And if you know Him, what's holding you back? What's holding you from giving Him everything? Trust Him. He has great plans for you right now and for the rest of your life, until you meet Him. Lord, we give you all the glory for what You're accomplishing. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give God praise for His word today?

